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Van Pelt

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- (54) **EXPEDITION VEHICLE**
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- (22) Filed: **Mar. 4, 2014**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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- (51) **Int. Cl.**
B60P 3/34 (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **B60P 3/34** (2013.01)
- (58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC B60P 3/34; B62D 33/0612; E06B 7/16
USPC 296/164, 165, 190.02
See application file for complete search history.

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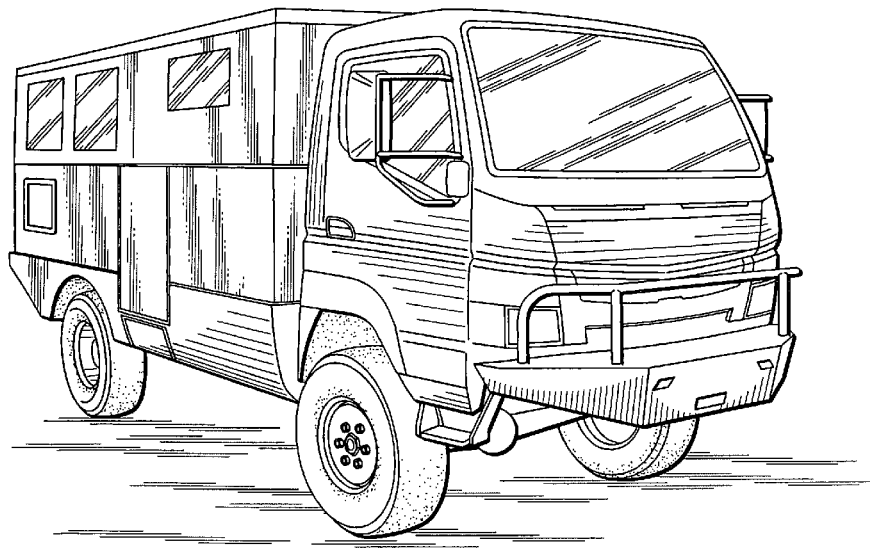
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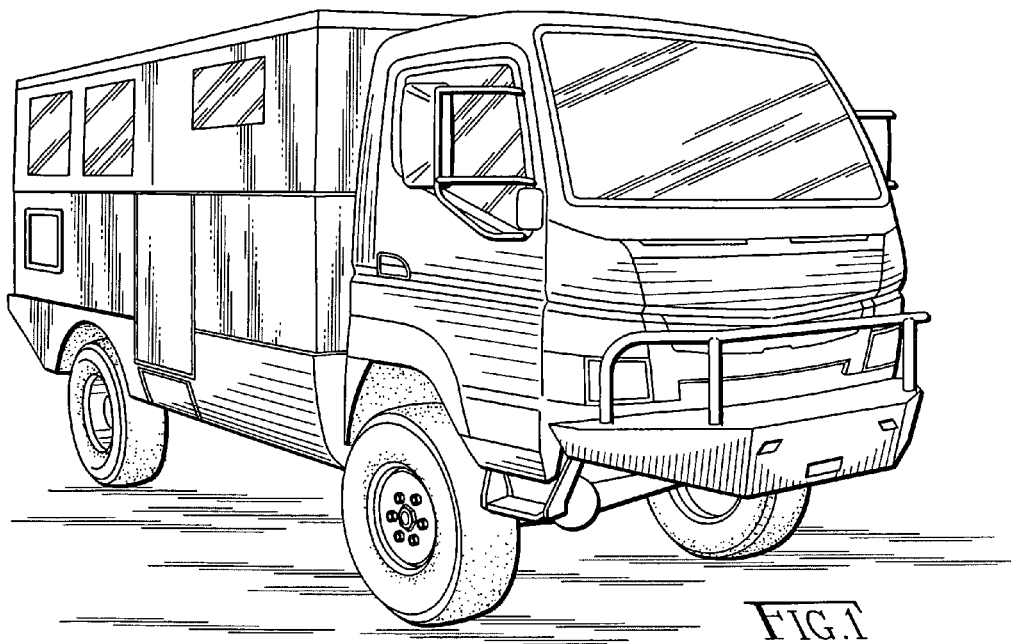
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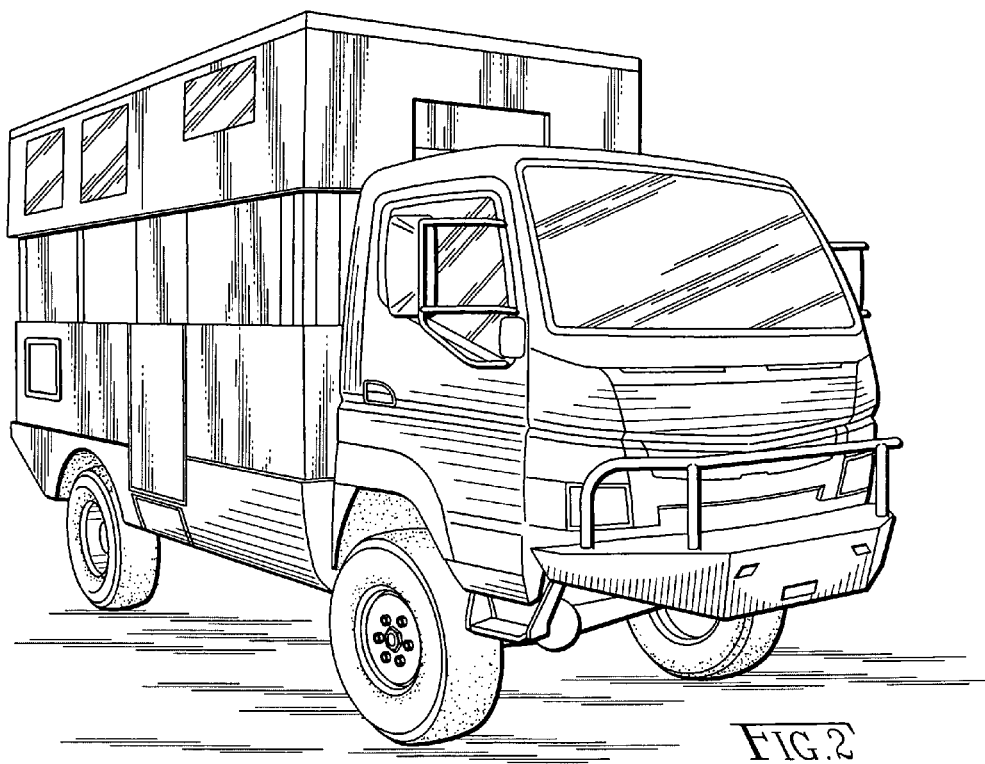
(57) **ABSTRACT**

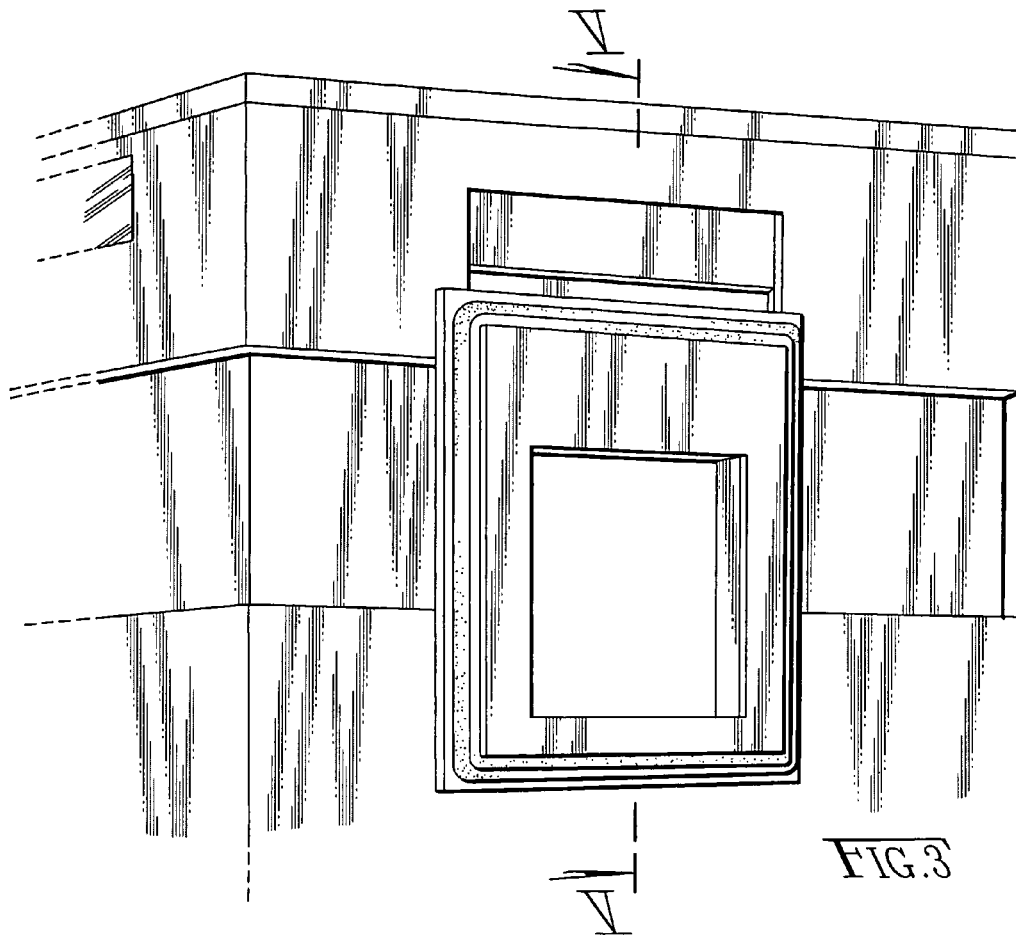
A motorized expedition vehicle has a truck cab, an engine and riding gear package, and a cabin. The cabin can serve any as a living, camping or office area. The wherein the cabin is expandable and collapsible between expanded and collapsed extremes. To do this, the cabin has an openable rectangular box structure. Namely, there is a rectangular and open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion, a rectangular and open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion, and one more rectangular-hoop shaped, intermediate sidewall sections. A crawl-space hatchway is formed between the cabin and cab.

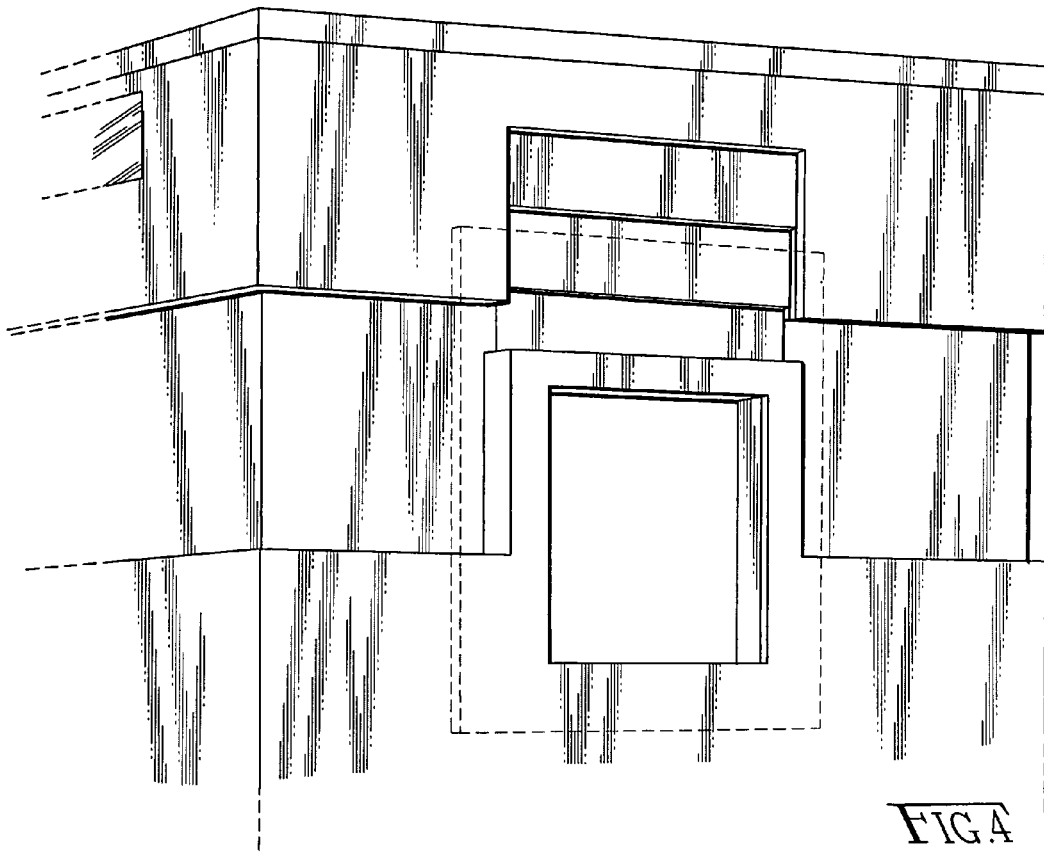
20 Claims, 21 Drawing Sheets

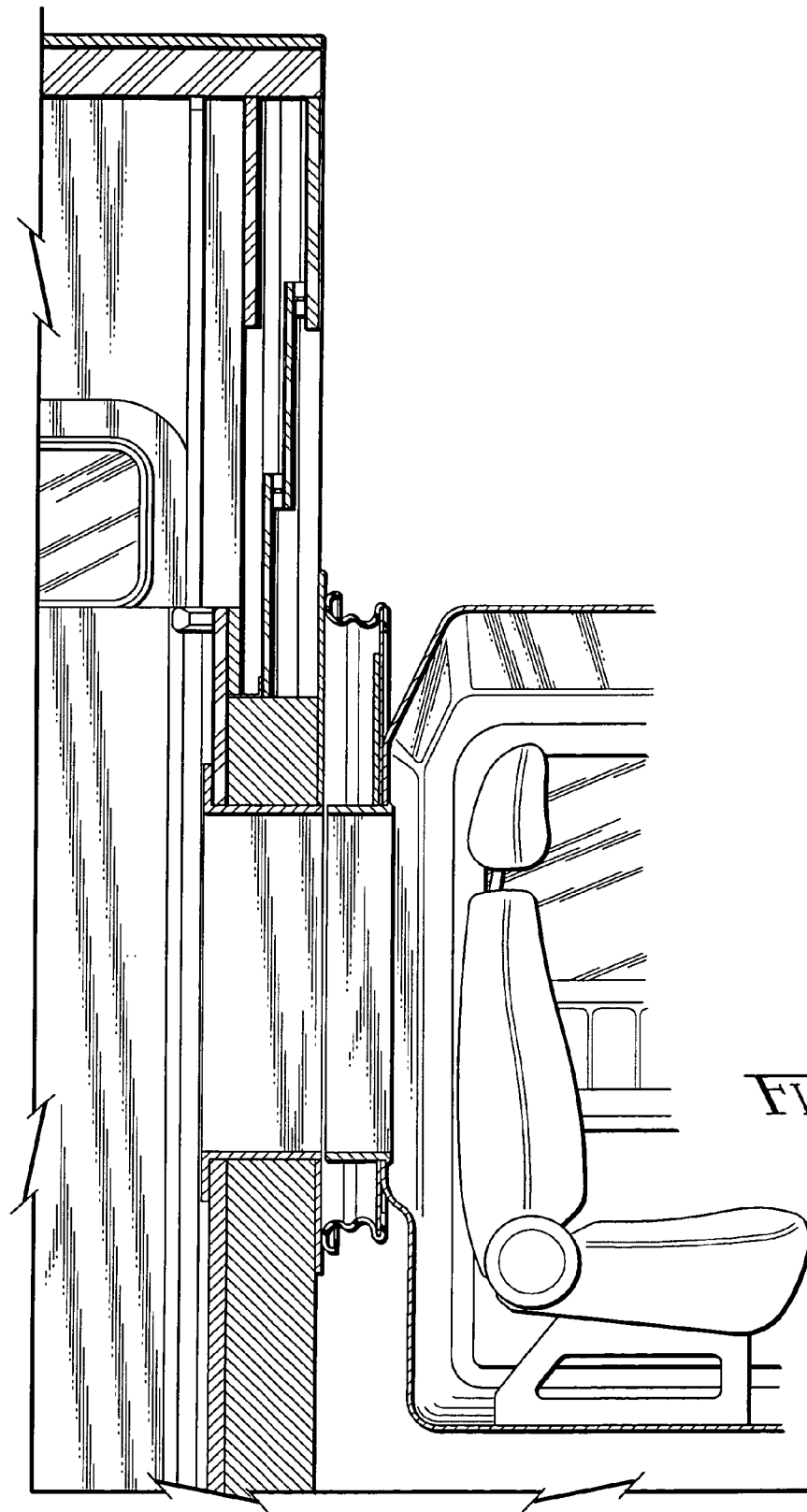


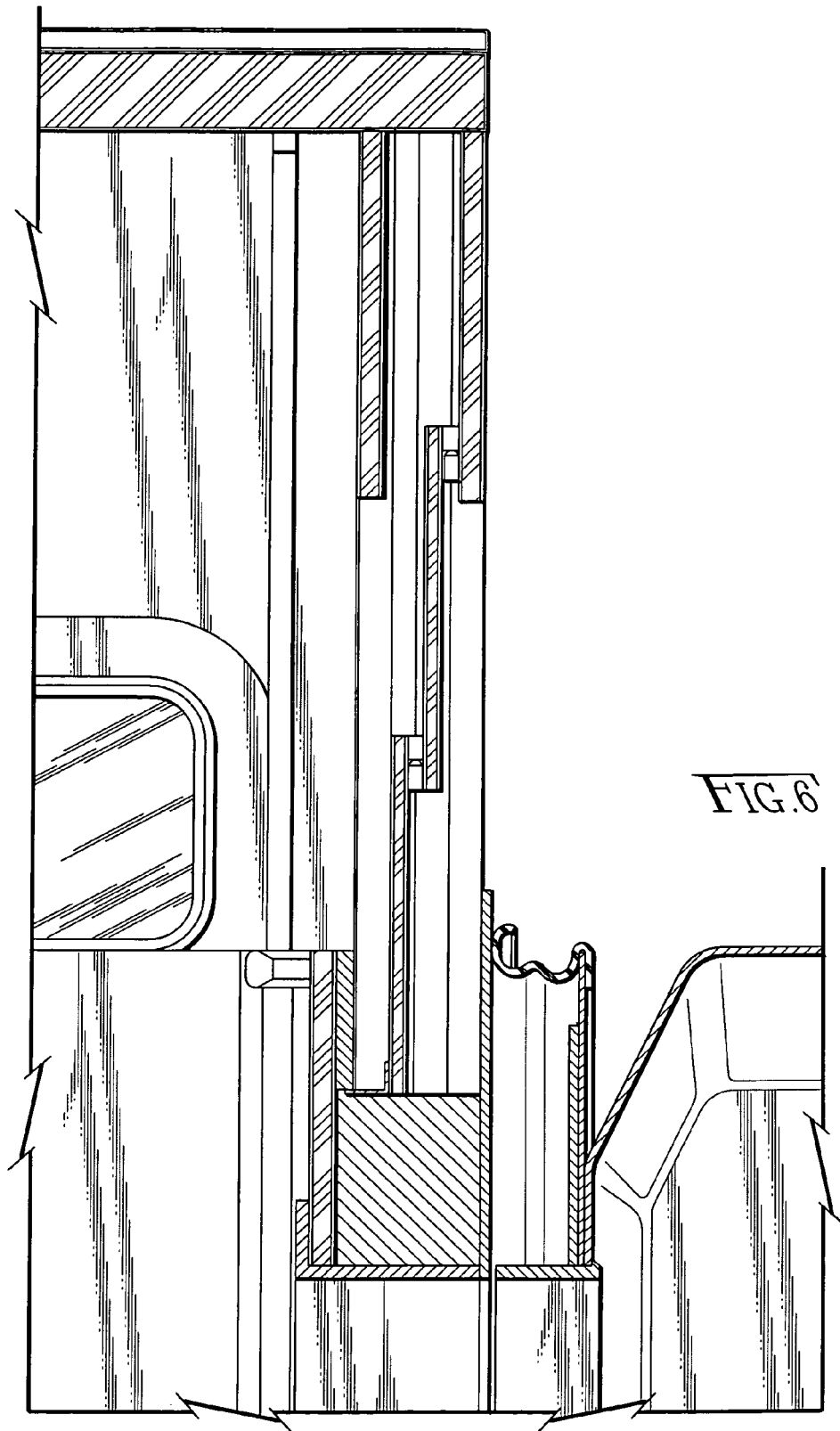












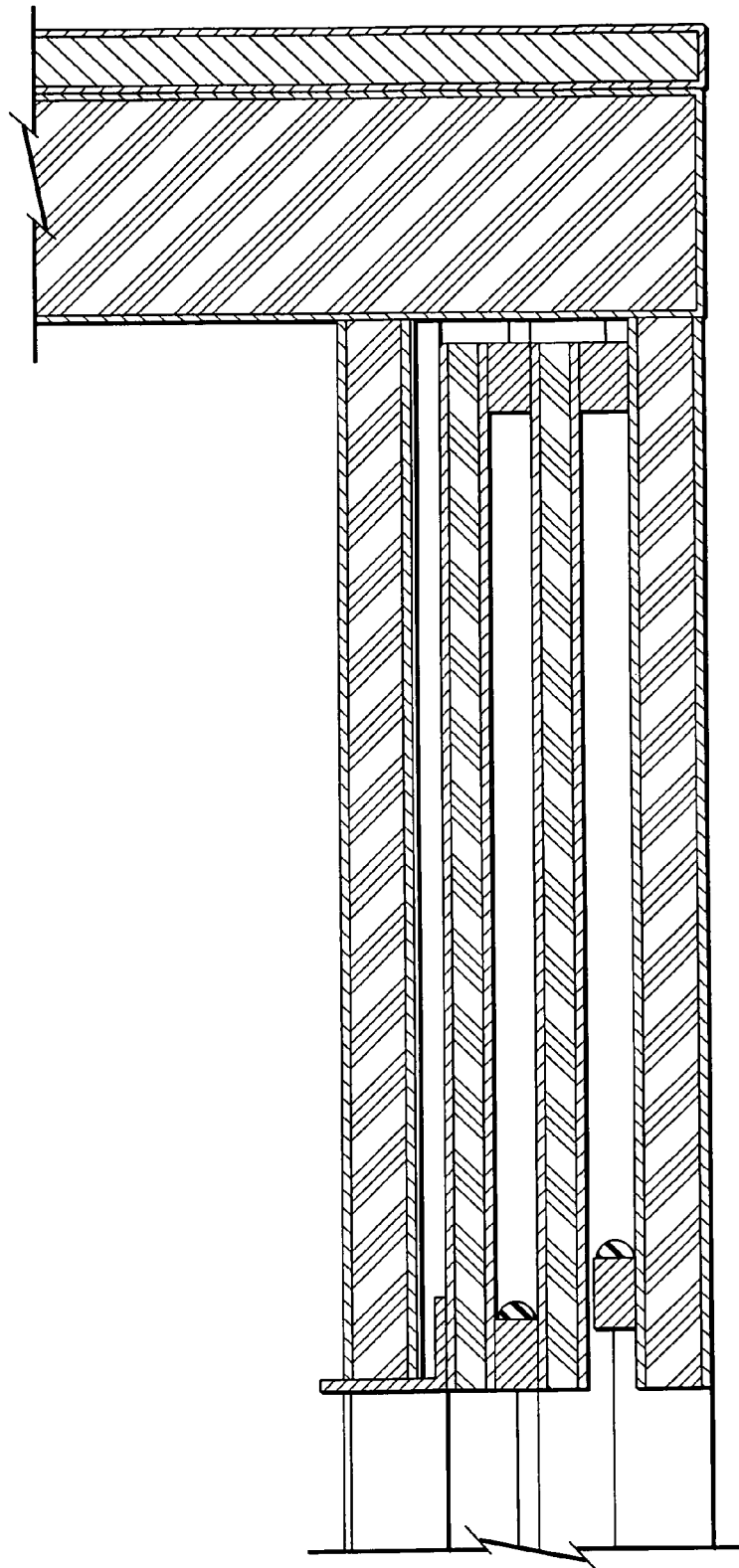
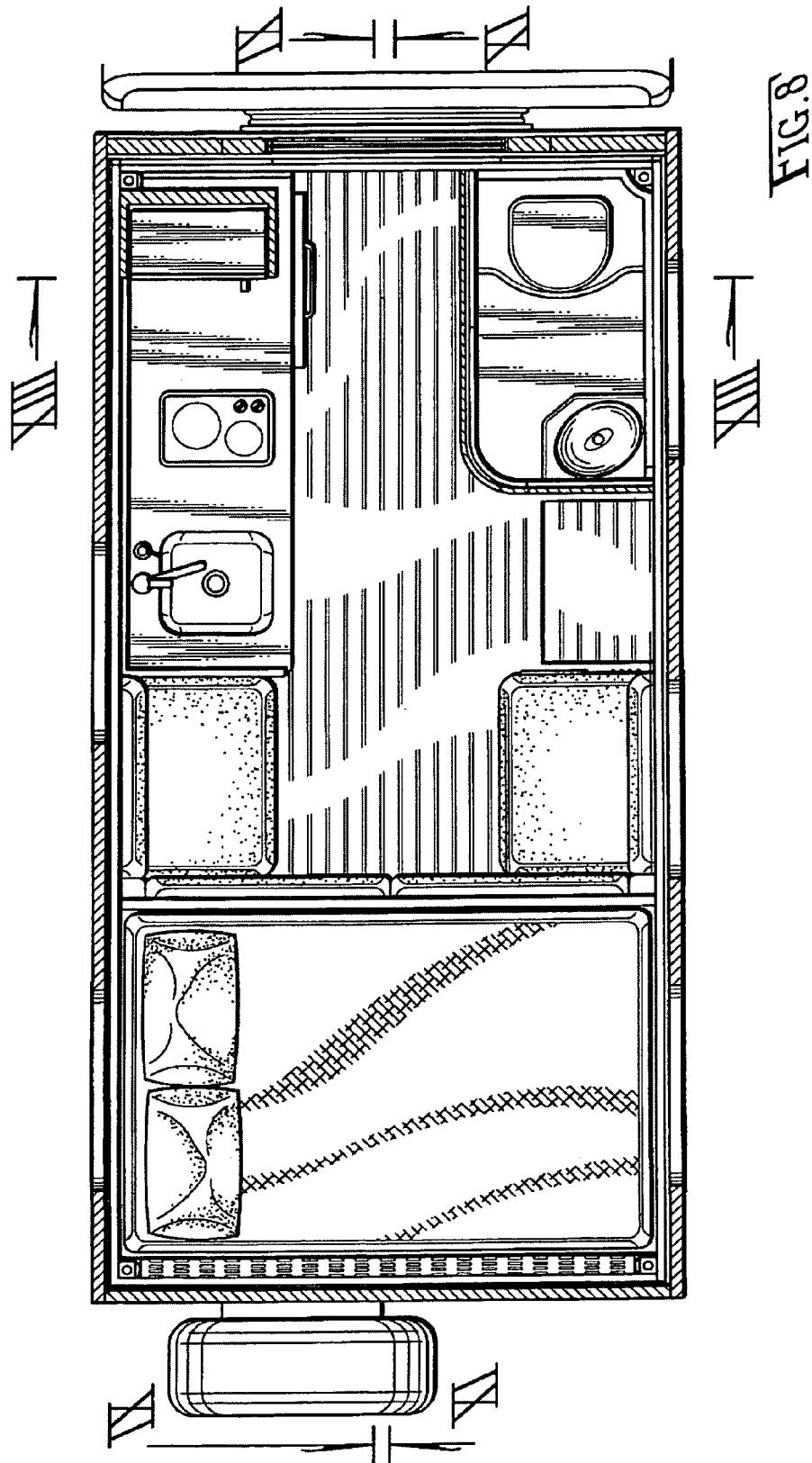
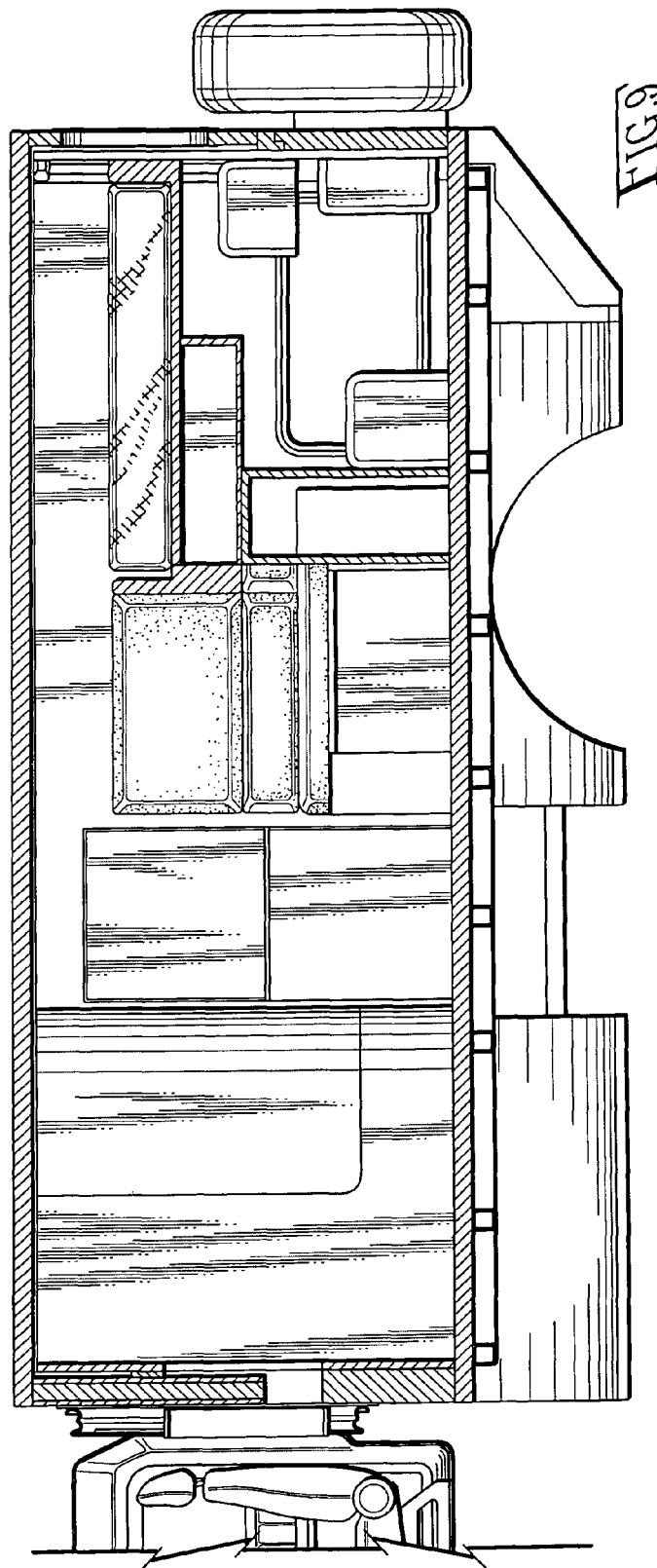
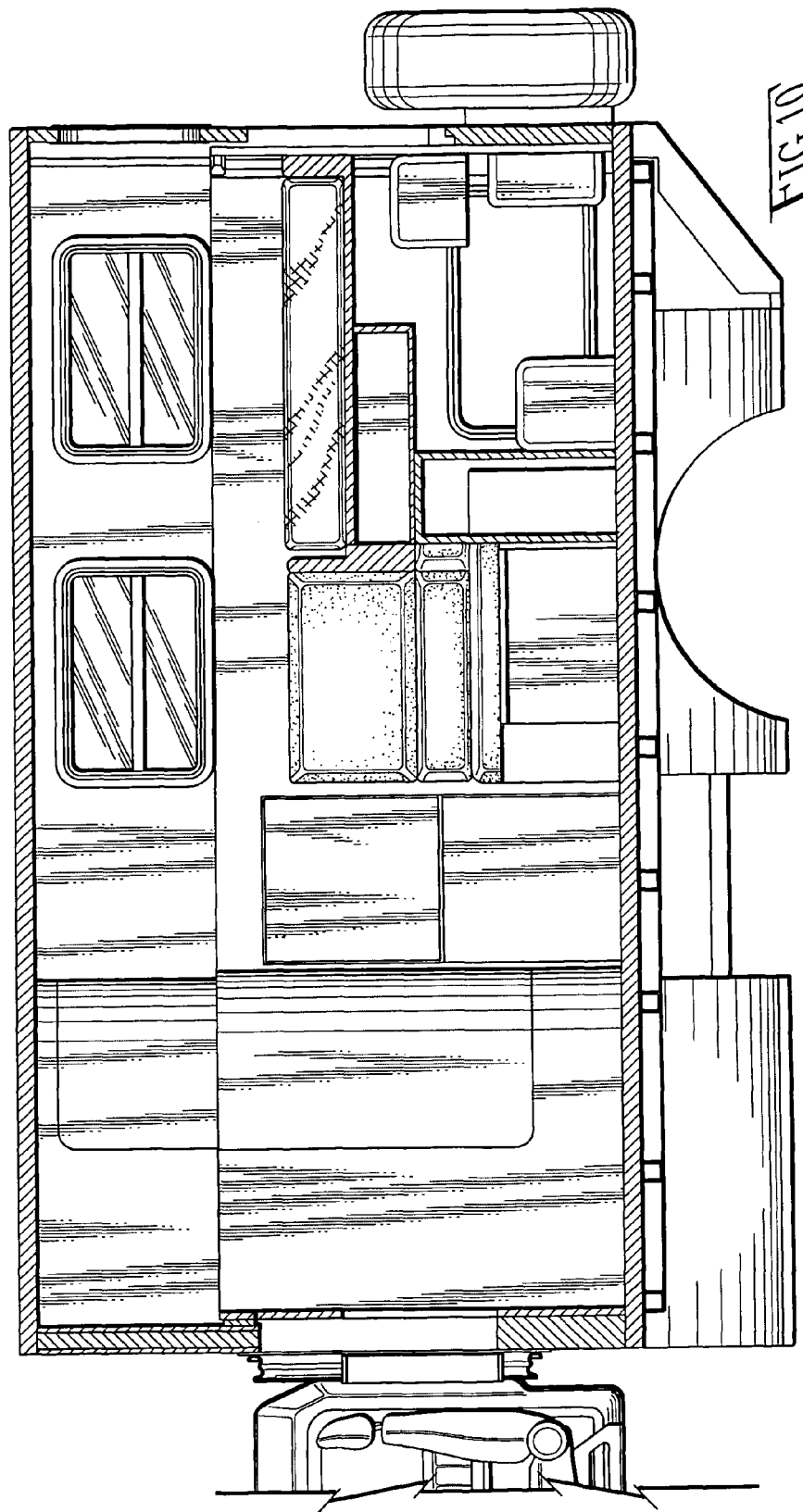


FIG. 7







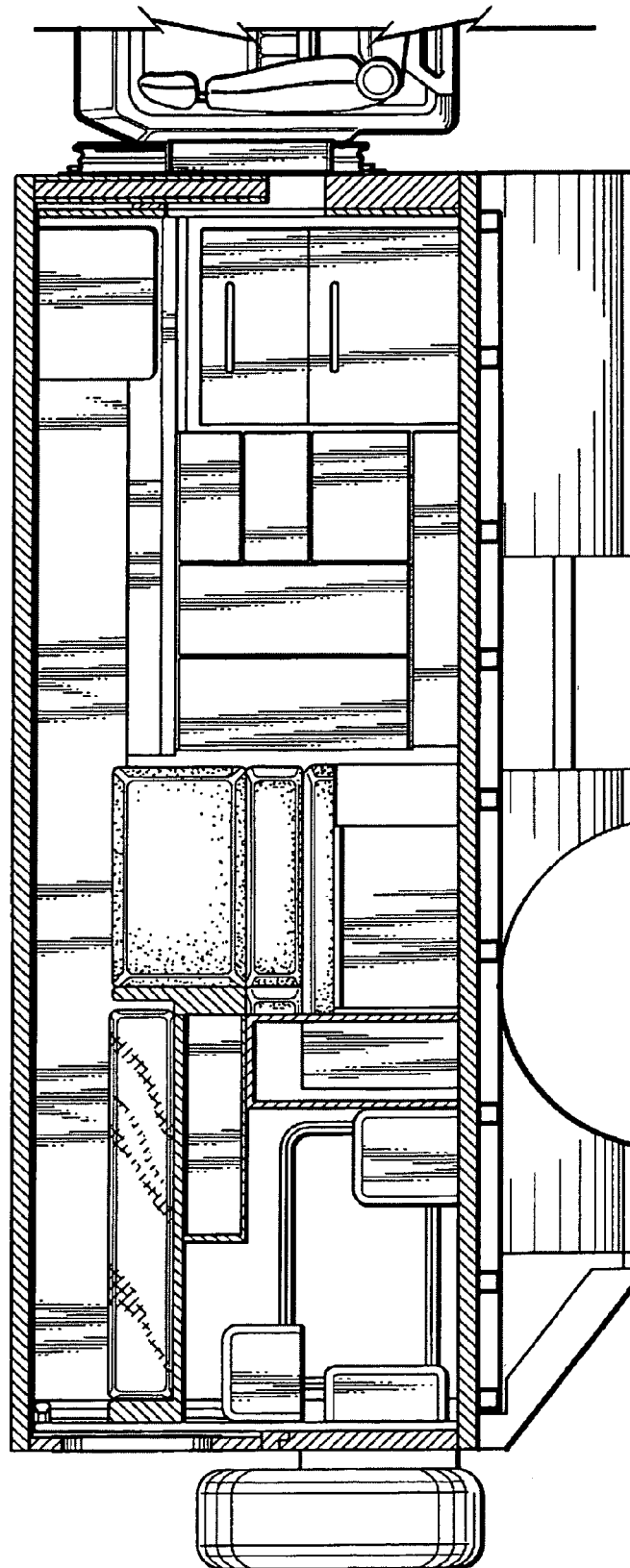


FIG. 11

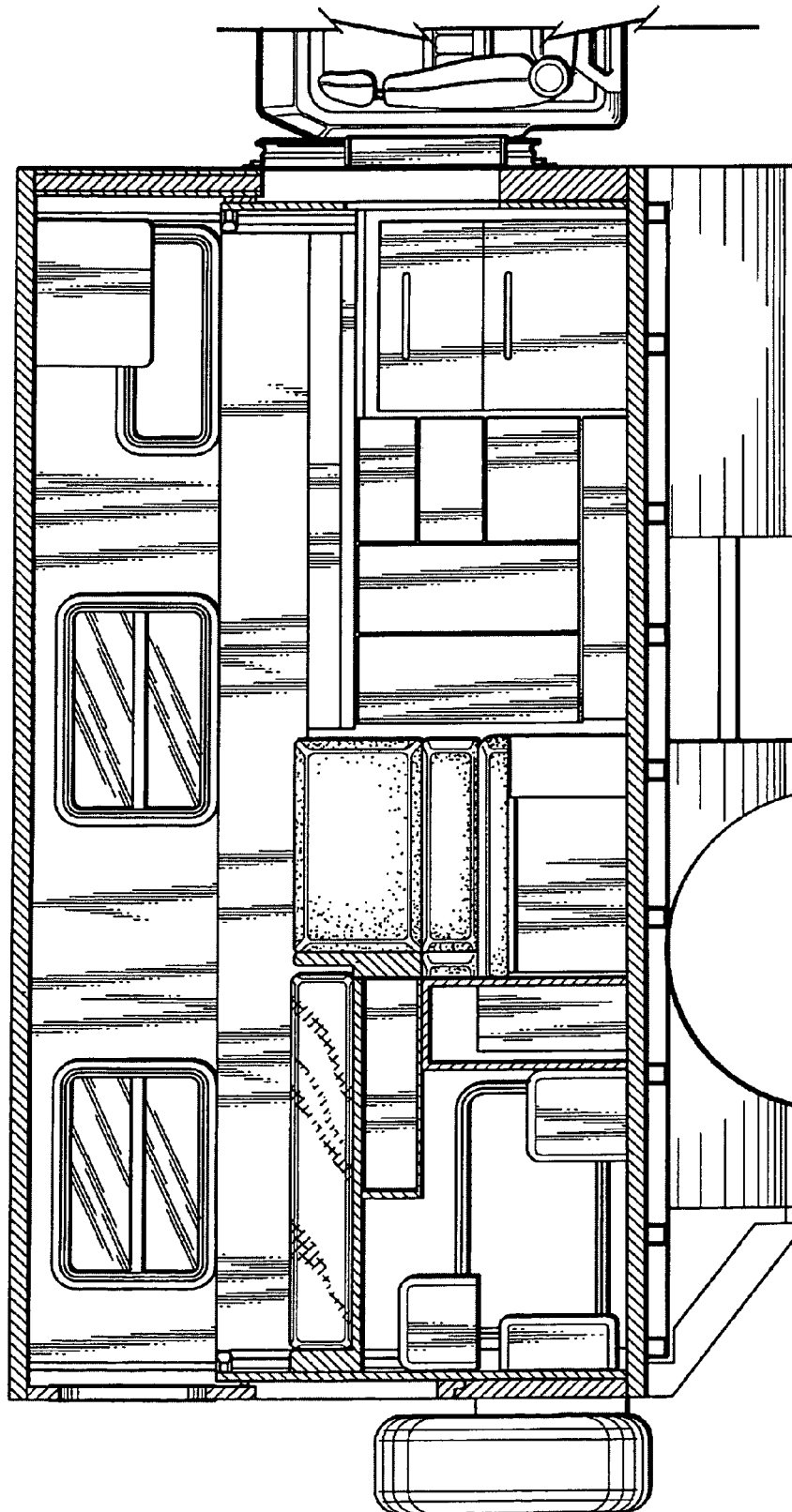


FIG. 12

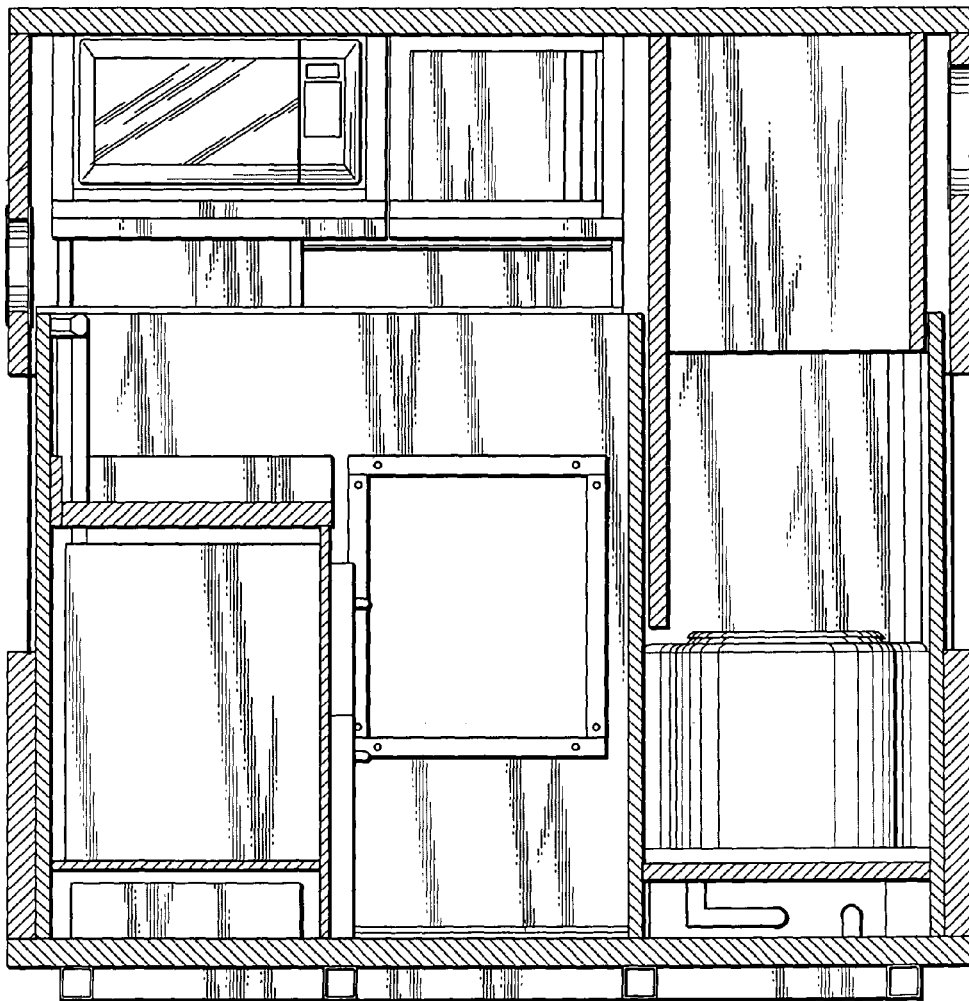
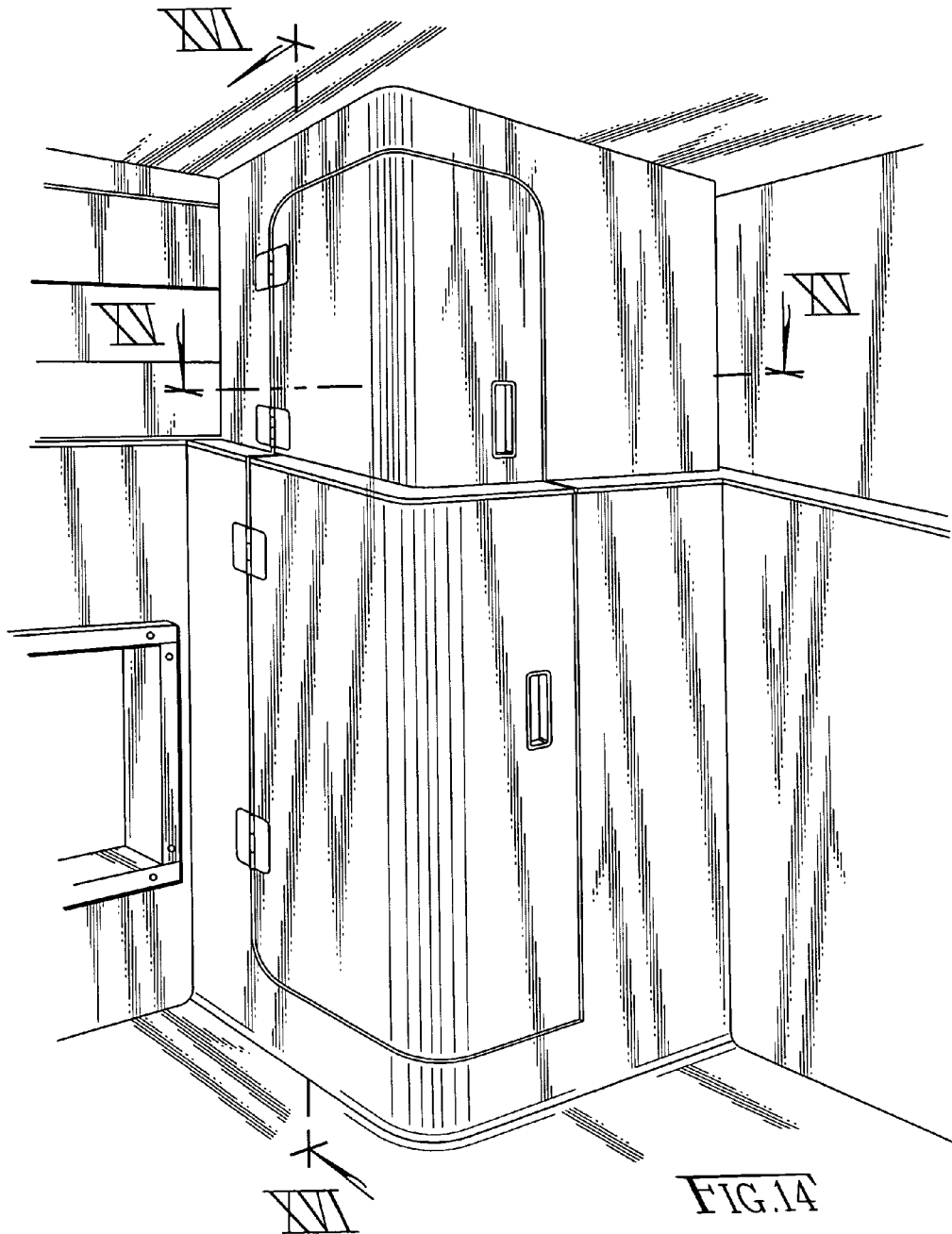


FIG. 13



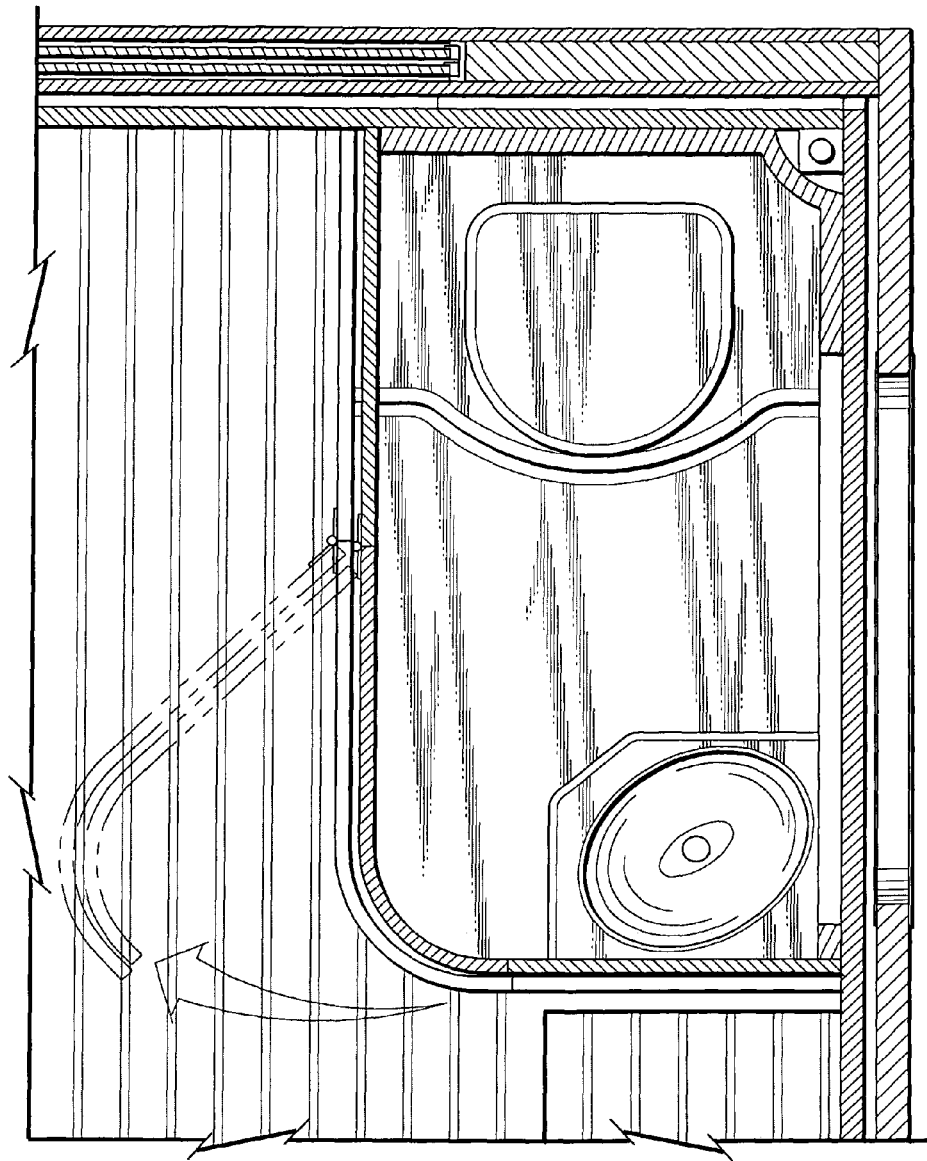


FIG. 15

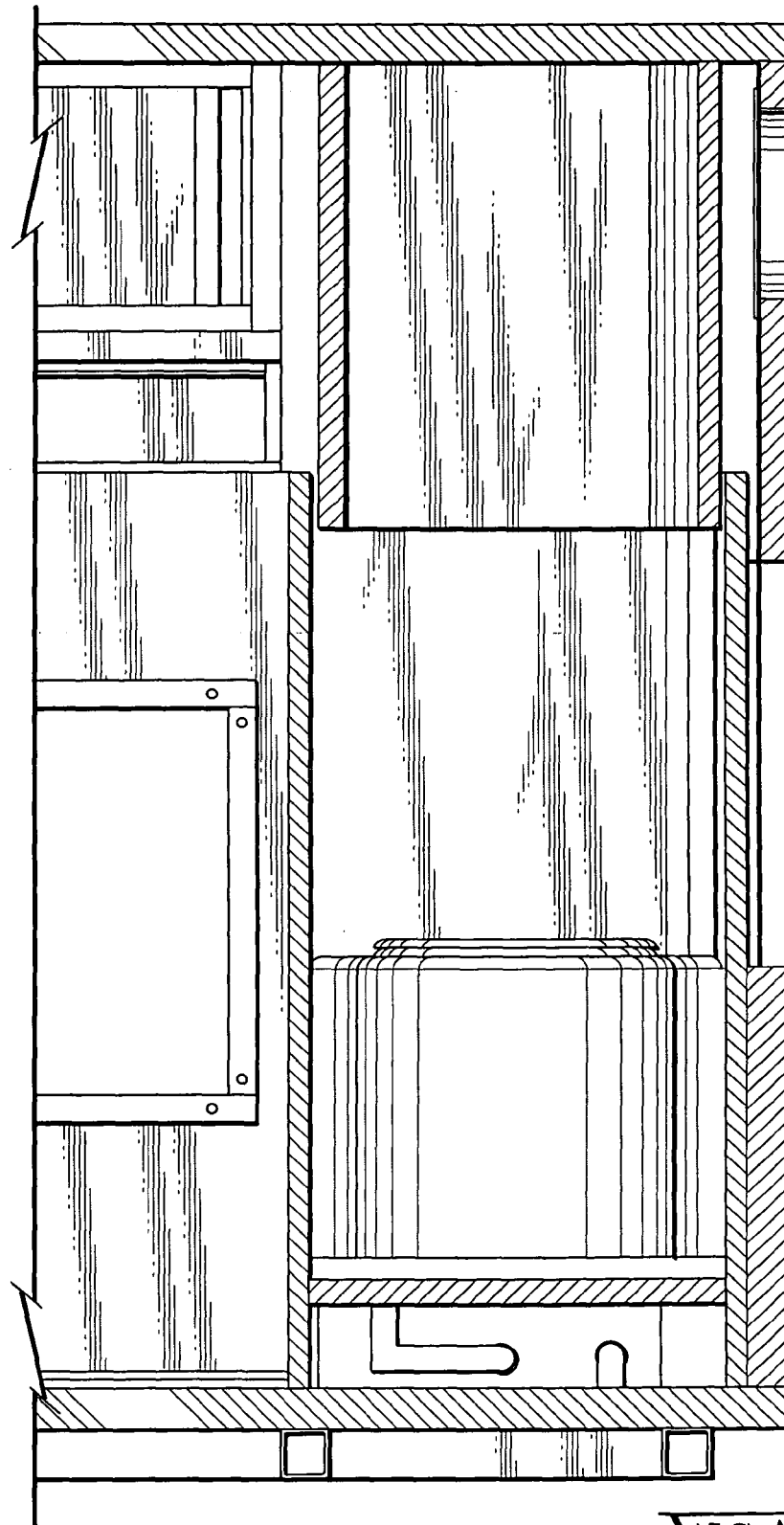
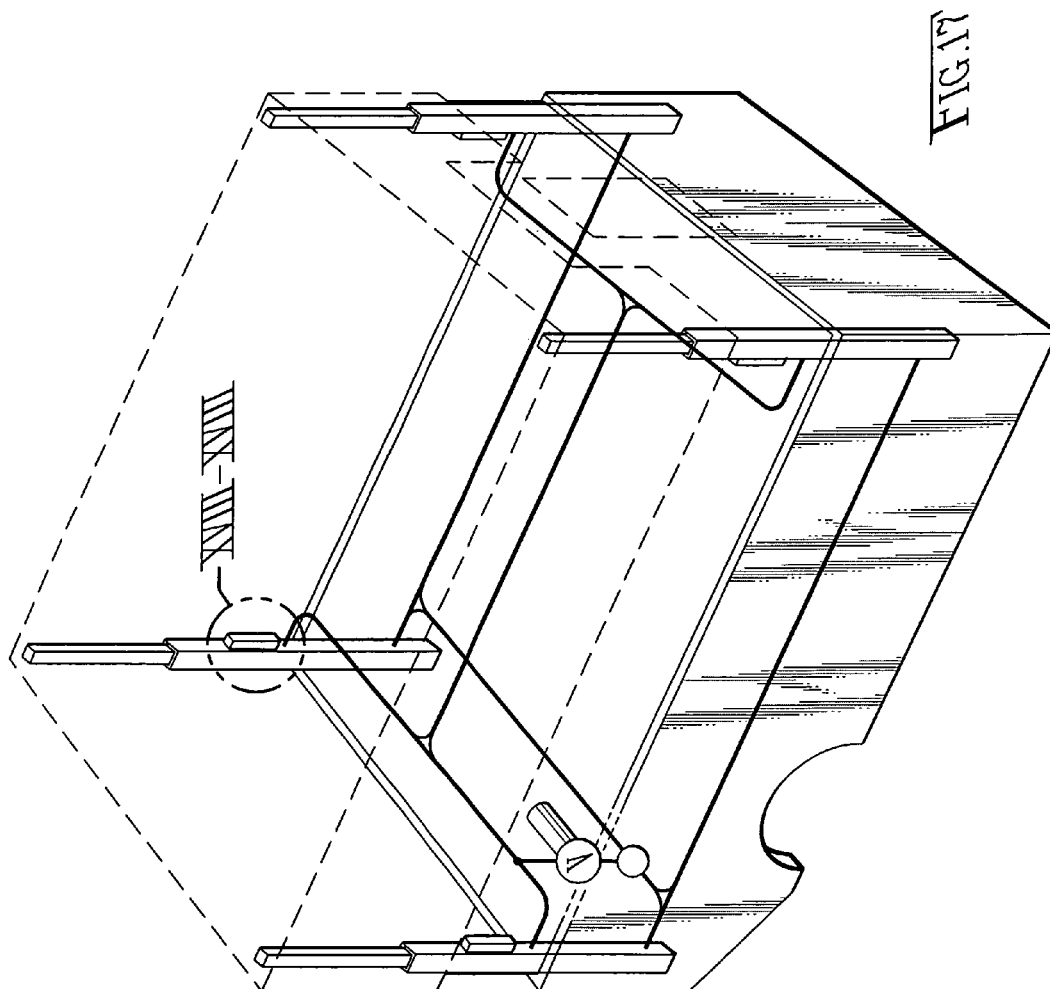
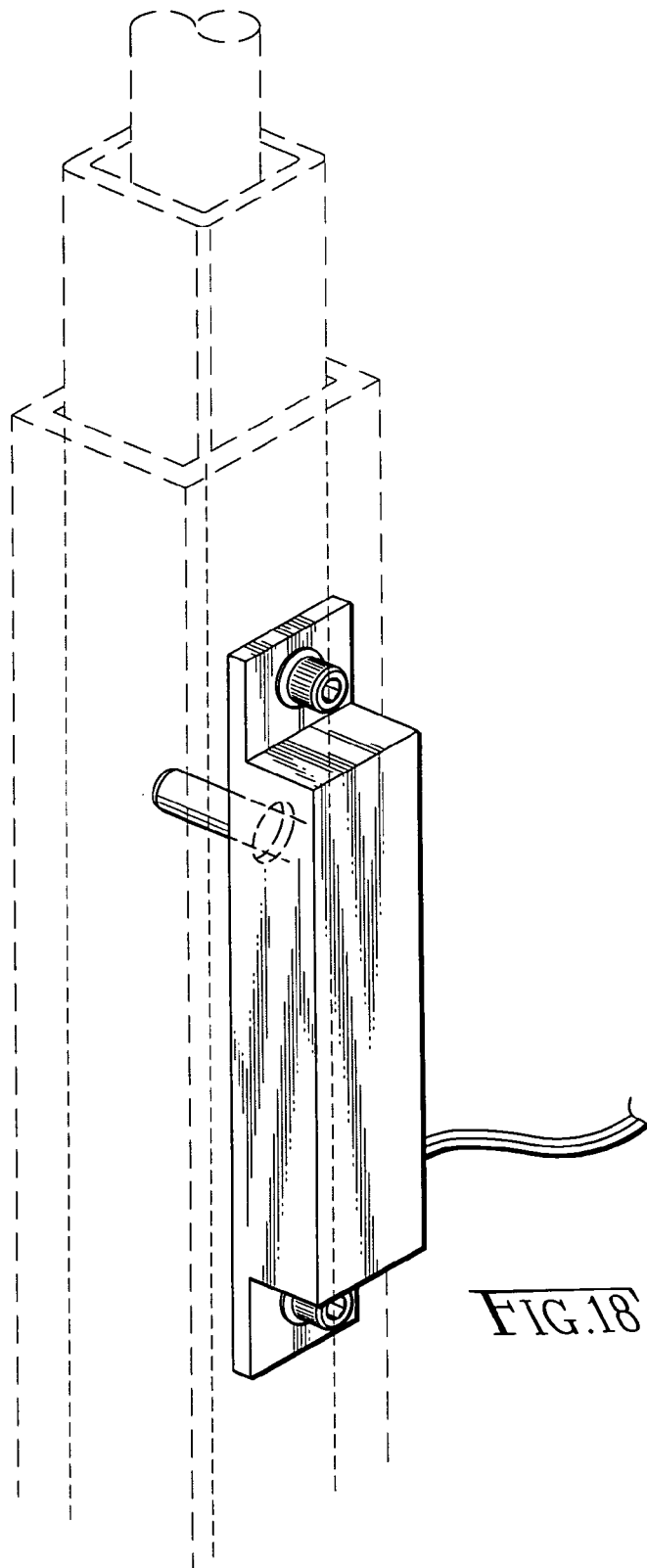


FIG. 16





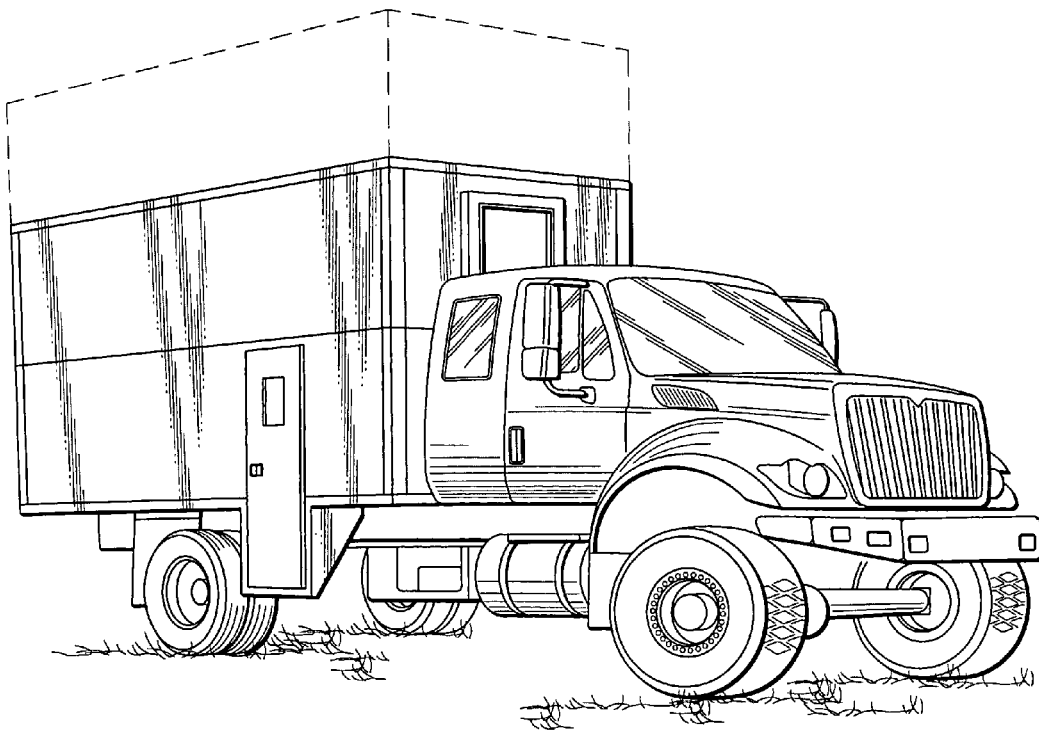
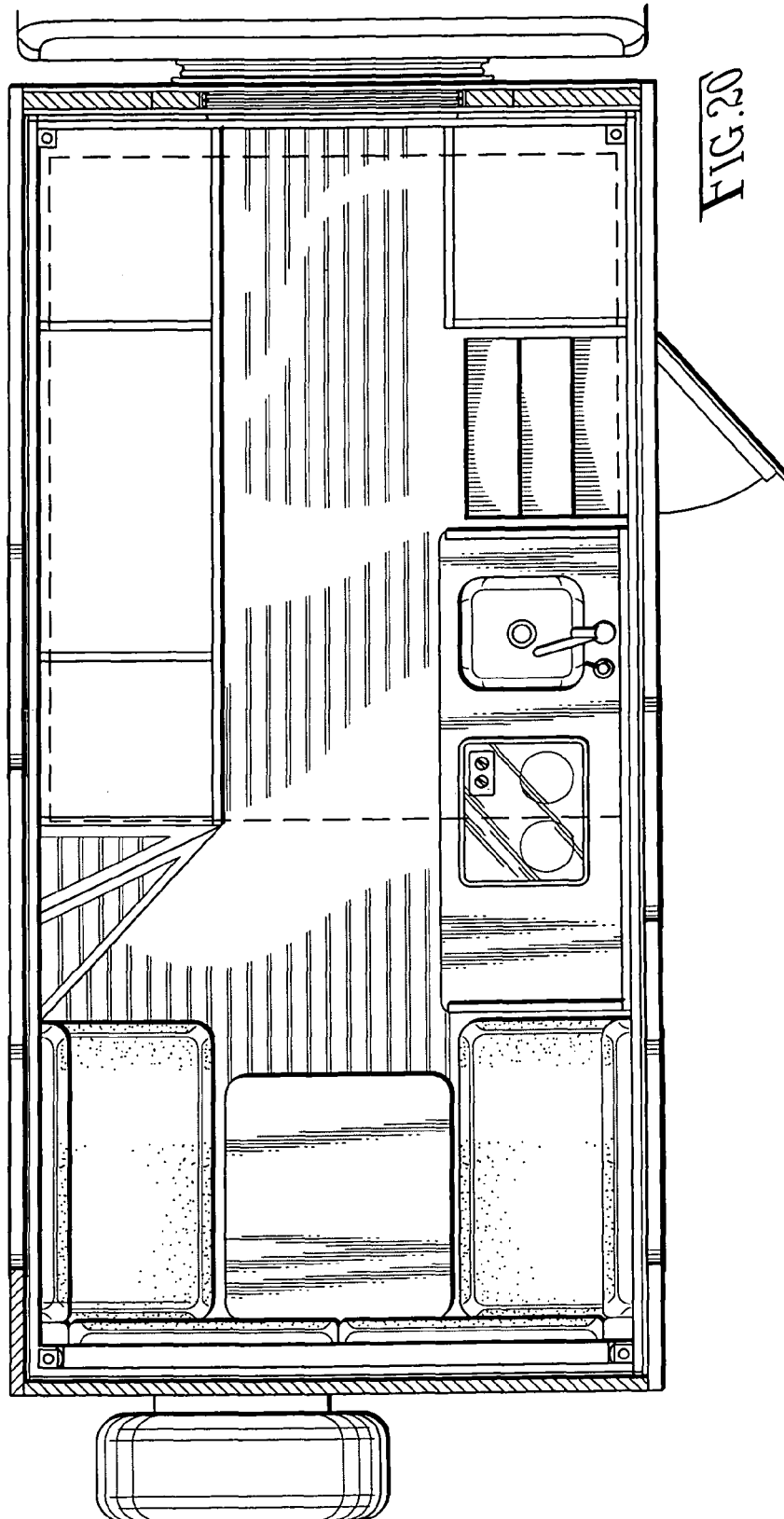


FIG.19



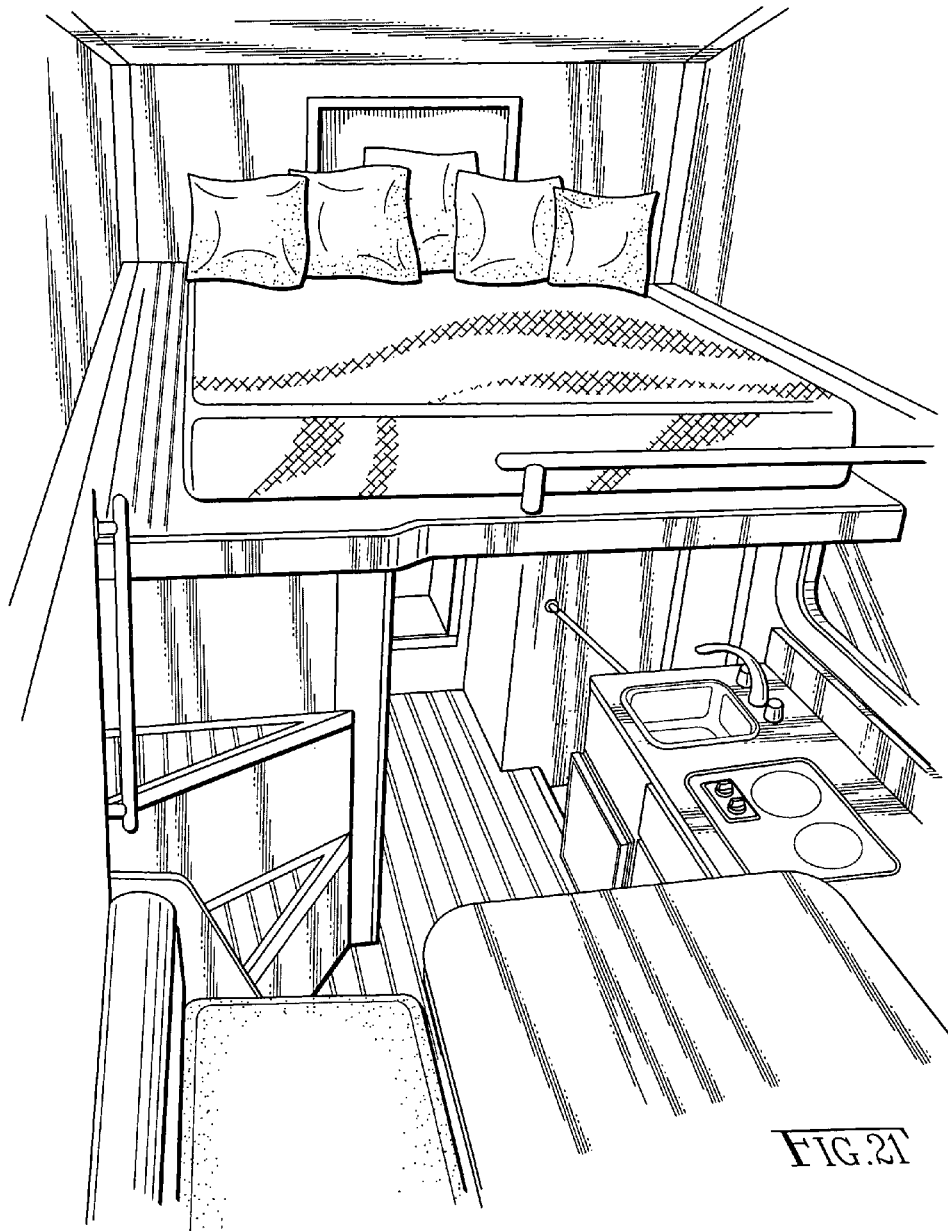


FIG. 21

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EXPEDITION VEHICLE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO PROVISIONAL APPLICATION(S)

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/851,240, filed Mar. 4, 2013 and U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/854,702, filed Apr. 29, 2013, wherein the foregoing patent disclosures are incorporated herein by this reference thereto.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to bodies and tops for land vehicles and, more particularly, to an expedition vehicle having an expandible and collapsible camper.

A number of additional features and objects will be apparent in connection with the following discussion of the preferred embodiments and examples with reference to the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

There are shown in the drawings certain exemplary embodiments of the invention as presently preferred. It should be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiments disclosed as examples, and is capable of variation within the scope of the skills of a person having ordinary skill in the art to which the invention pertains. In the drawings,

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an expedition vehicle in accordance with the invention, wherein the cabin therefor is shown in an extreme collapsed position;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view comparable to FIG. 1 except with the cabin expanded vertically into an extreme expanded position;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the front wall of the cabin, with the cab removed from view, to show a hatchway that provides an open crawlspace (or otherwise passageway) between the cabin and cab, and further shows that open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin is only partially extended to the expanded extreme and also has a cut-out in the front wall, which cut-out is filled with a two-panel retractable closure (like a miniature garage door) in order to provide clearance in the collapsing open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion for the hatchway when being retracted to the collapsed extreme;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view comparable to FIG. 3 except showing the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin extended to the expanded extreme, showing the two-panel retractable closure filling the void in the cut-out in the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line V-V in FIG. 3;

FIG. 6 is an enlarged scale section view detail of the upper half of FIG. 5;

FIG. 7 is a section view comparable to FIG. 6 except showing the two panel closure collapsed;

FIG. 8 is plan view of the cabin in FIG. 2 except with the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion removed from view;

FIG. 9 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line IX-IX in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is a section view comparable to FIG. 9 except showing the cabin expanded (and the spare tire removed from view);

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FIG. 11 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line XI-XI in FIG. 8;

FIG. 12 is a section view comparable to FIG. 11 except showing the cabin expanded;

FIG. 13 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line XIII-XIII in FIG. 8;

FIG. 14 is an enlarged scale perspective view from inside the cabin of the door to the water closet indicated in FIG. 13;

FIG. 15 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line XV-XV in FIG. 14;

FIG. 16 is an enlarged scale section view taken along line XVI-XVI in FIG. 14;

FIG. 17 is an enlarged scale perspective view of the cabin in isolation, and in the expanded state, and also with the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin shown in dashed lines;

FIG. 18 is an enlarged scale perspective view of detail XVIII-XVIII in FIG. 17;

FIG. 19 is a perspective view comparable to FIG. 2 except of an alternate embodiment of an expedition vehicle in accordance with the invention, and with the cabin expanded vertically into an extreme expanded position;

FIG. 20 is plan view of the cabin in FIG. 19 and comparable to the plan view of FIG. 8 in that the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion removed from view; and

FIG. 21 is an enlarged scale perspective view from inside the cabin, and comparable to FIG. 14 except that, while the door to the water closet is partially in view, more significantly FIG. 21 shows one bed platform and living area suspended from the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin whereas another bed platform and living area are mounted in the open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion of the cabin, wherein the two living areas are traversed by spiral staircase (of a half of coil).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

FIGS. 1-21 and show a first and second embodiment of an expedition vehicle in accordance with the invention. The expedition vehicle can be reckoned as comprising a cab, a chassis, and a camper.

However, it is preferred herein to refer to the camper as a "cabin" instead. Moreover, it is further preferred to refer to the chassis as the an "engine and riding gear package."

Accordingly, an expedition vehicle in accordance with the invention comprises:

- a truck cab,
- an engine and riding gear package, and
- a cabin comprising a living/office area.

"Cabin" refers to the camper/living/office area.

"Cab" refers to the compartment containing the driver's seat, dashboard and the like. The cab as well as the engine and riding gear package are typically stock items modified with a cabin in accordance with the invention, including any modifications to any of the cab or else the engine and riding gear package. A short list of preferred brands to build upon include without limitation:

- Unimog,
- Freightliner,
- BAE,
- Fuso,
- Ford,
- International, and so on.

Nevertheless, any of the cab or else the engine and riding gear package are freely modified for purposes of the invention. For instance with the cab, preferred modifications in almost every

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instance include an inventive hatchway to be described more particularly below, as well as modification of the dashboard to include all the custom controllers for controlling over the custom control systems, to be more particularly described below.

FIG. 1 shows the cabin in an extreme collapsed position. FIG. 2 shows the cabin expanded vertically into an extreme expanded position.

To do this, as FIGS. 3 and 4 show better, the cabin essentially comprises a layered construction of a base, a top cap, and an interconnecting telescopic sections.

More particularly, the cabin has an openable rectangular box structure comprising:

- a rectangular and open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion,
- a rectangular and open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion, and
- one more rectangular-hoop shaped, intermediate sidewall sections.

The cabin structure can be cycled between collapsed and extended extremes. The intermediate sidewall sections telescope into one or both of the (1) open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion and/or (2) open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion. The open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion is vertically stationary during extension and retractions strokes. Conversely, the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion travels between vertically extended and collapsed extremes during extension and retraction strokes.

When collapsed, the cabin/camper is cab high. That way, the expedition vehicle in accordance with the invention can be driven into a standard international cargo-container and be shipped abroad.

FIGS. 3-6 show better one of the aspects of the invention, namely, a pass through hatchway in the front wall of the cabin that allows person to transit back and forth between the cab and cabin. That is, the cabin has one doorway in a sidewall (ie., the right sidewall) of the cabin. But in addition to the doorway, the cabin has an extra egress, namely, the pass through hatchway.

There is a hatchway between the cab and cabin which is permanently OPEN, inasmuch as, there is no door provision. The hatchway forms a short tube or tunnel. The hatchway is partitioned into one section which is permanently attached to the cabin and another section which is permanently attached to the cab. For suspension purposes, the cab and cabin are allowed to rock laterally on independent arcs from each other, albeit between small-angle angular extremes. Hence the outside walls of the both the cab and cabin are provided with independent face seals, or bulb seals, which form a sealing pressure just by compression therebetween. However, these seals do allow a relative orbital motion relative to each other and maintain sealing pressure. (Could possibly have also used an accordion seal attached by one ring of fasteners to the cab and another to the cabin. However, since the cab for some trucks is meant to pitch up and forward to give mechanics access to the engine, such an accordion seal would have to be undone each time for the engine compartment to be OPENED.)

Hence these face or bulb seals (1) make small oscillations or orbits relative each other given the independent swaying of the cab and cabin, and also (2) flip open with undoing any fasteners when the engine compartment is OPENED.

FIGS. 5-7 show that the open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the large box-like structure that forms the cabin . . . well . . . that open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion has a cut-out in the front wall. The cut-out is filled with a two-panel retractable closure (like a miniature garage

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door). This cut-out provides clearance in the collapsing open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion for the hatchway when being retracted to the collapsed extreme.

The pass through hatchway comprises a security feature. The hatchway is permanently open, or openable to persons with the keys or unlocking devices. The hatchway allows permanent opportunity for persons to transit back and forth between the cabin and cab (provided as said, as long as they have the keys and/or unlocking device for any door thereto, and none shown).

For example, if the vehicle is parked overnight with cabin expanded to the fully expanded position, presumably the occupants are attempting sleep in the cabin. If however, there should develop a security threat, where the best response is to retreat, the pass through hatchway allows the following action. The occupants can evacuate out of the cabin and into the cab, start the vehicle, and begin to drive away:— or that is, away from danger, and presumptively to safety. While the vehicle is pulling away, the occupants can actuate the automatic actuation of the cabin, such that the cabin collapses to the fully collapsed state while the vehicle is underway.

With reference to FIG. 12, A skylight in the roof allows occupants to get out of the cabin even when the cabin is collapsed.

A hatch is provided on an shelf (eg., bed surface) above the rear utilities and storage compartment to allow an occupant in the cabin, even when the cabin is collapsed, to wiggle through the hatch into the utilities compartment, and then from there, wiggle through another access opening out through the rear of the cabin. That way, if the vehicle has been parked inside a cargo container, where none of the doors can open, and the cabin is collapsed, any occupant therein is not trapped, but can manage an exit therefrom.

The air conditioning is mounted in the rear lower utilities compartment, as well as anything else typically mounted on the roof of a camper. The idea is, to keep the roof free of structure that would not allow the vehicle to fit inside a cargo container.

With general reference to FIGS. 8-13, the sidewalls are preferably a composite structure of FRP skins bonded on a dense foam core. The seals between telescopic sidewall sections are a form of a wiper seal.

Sliding surfaces preferably made from UHMW polymeric material or the like, with very low coefficient of friction and thereby reduce sticking. Preferably there are four (4) or so vertical strips on each side and each end.

Contrasting FIG. 12 to FIG. 21, one or more bed platforms can formed on and/or mounted from either (1) open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion (shown in both FIGS. 12 and 21) and/or (2) open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion (only shown in FIG. 21).

FIGS. 13 and 21 show better (among other views) that cabinet structures, TV's and/or microwaves can be hung from the extendible open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion of the cabin. Such accessories hung from the roof will be spaced away from the sidewalls to allow the intermediate hoops to just pass inside the clearance therefor. Likewise, other suspended articles like blinds are also spaced with a clearance gap for the same purpose.

FIGS. 14-16 show better that the cabin interior can include an interior room, such as a shower/bathroom (eg., water closet). The door therefor has several features:—

- it is partitioned into upper and lower panels,
- the upper panel travels up and down in retraction and extension stroke co-planar inside the stationary lower panel,

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the two panels have separate hinge axes which are offset relative to each other,
the panels are actually curved,
the upper panel's outer edge at the outside of the curve travels horizontally away from the counterpart outer edge in the lower panel which the door is OPENED, and does the opposite when the door is CLOSED.

The main door into and out of the cabin likewise comprises a two-panel system as well.

It is a design preference in accordance with the invention that the time for the cabin to actuate from the fully expanded state to the fully collapsed state comprises about thirty seconds (about a half of a minute). It is a further design preference that the cabin can do this while the vehicle is speeding at speeds of sixty miles per hour or so (eg., approximately one hundred kilometers per hour).

Given the foregoing, the sleeping occupants are spared the risk of having to evacuate the cabin by first stepping outside into the night air before they can safely retreat into the cab of the vehicle.

FIG. 17 shows better that, to keep the upper-sidewall/roof portion and any intermediate wall portions on track during the extension and retraction strokes, the cabin will at least 4 hydraulic actuators/slide-rods in the corners of the cabin, perhaps 6 slide rods for larger cabins. FIG. 17 also shows that there is a compensation system so that all of the hydraulic cylinders operate in unison. Otherwise, without such a system, it is hard to avoid one cylinder or more from binding to halt when the vehicle is parked such that cabin is listing a little bit. Electric service has to be managed from the lower-sidewall/floor portion to the upper-sidewall/roof portion by extensible lines such as coiled lines, or saggy lines pulled taut by springs and the like.

FIG. 17 show the hydraulic cylinders driven to their upper extreme extension position. FIG. 18 shows a safety provision. A locking pin is spring biased to extend past a notch in the rod of the hydraulic cylinders (or into a index hole for pin, and not shown). Hence the spring biased pin is biased to slide against the sidewall of inner rod while inner rod is driven to inner rod's upper extreme. As soon as inner rod's bottom or index hole slides past spring-biased pin, pin moves over further underneath the bottom of rod (or into an index hole therefor, and not shown). That way, sliding pin provides an automatic and power-free safety lock for retaining the inner rod in its upper extreme.

When a user wants to compress the telescoped inner rod back into the hydraulic cylinders, preferably the user powers up the electric utilities for the vehicle (or otherwise turns the electric service ON), switches ON the relays (relays not shown) for bleeding the hydraulics (or forcibly de-elevating the inner rod). On the same circuit as the relays being switched ON, there is a linear actuator solenoid which thrusts the pin to the unlocked position, allowing the inner post clearance to de-elevate past by the pin.

As soon as the inner rod is compressed to its retracted extreme, the power to the solenoid can be switched OFF. The pin is allow to ride against the inner rod's sidewall by means of the spring biasing. The pin will automatically provide a lock under the inner rod (or into an index hole therefor) on the next cycle the inner rod is elevated, and without electric power or any other prime mover.

Returning again to FIGS. 8-12, it is an additional aspect of the invention that the cabin include a tailgate. Among other uses of the tailgate, if the vehicle is driven cab forward into a shipping container (not shown), as typical for cargo ship shipping to oversea ports, the driver can quit the vehicle by crawling through the pass through hatchway, make his way to

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the back of the cabin, and squirm out the tailgate. Otherwise, the container sidewalls would block the cab doors from opening, and thereby lock the driver in the cab for good. But with the tailgate, the driver can drive in, and worm his way backwards until he emerges out of the tailgate.

FIGS. 19-21 shown an alternate embodiment of an expandable cabin. The FIGS. 1-18 cabin had a single telescopic section. This cabin of FIGS. 19-21 has a multiplicity of telescopic sections such that a fully expanded state for this cabin might be two or three times higher than the FIGS. 1-18 cabin.

The invention having been disclosed in connection with the foregoing variations and examples, additional variations will now be apparent to persons skilled in the art. The invention is not intended to be limited to the variations specifically mentioned, and accordingly reference should be made to the appended claims rather than the foregoing discussion of preferred examples, to assess the scope of the invention in which exclusive rights are claimed.

I claim:

1. A motorized expedition vehicle comprising:

a truck cab,

an engine and riding gear package, and

a cabin comprising a living enclosure;

wherein the cabin is expandible and collapsible between expanded and collapsed extremes, and has a vertically telescopic, rectangular box structure comprising:

a rigid rectangular and open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion,

a rigid rectangular and open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion, and

zero or more rigid rectangular-hoop shaped, intermediate sidewall sections.

2. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, wherein: the cab has a rear sidewall formed with a hatchway;

the cabin has a front sidewall formed with a mating hatchway sized and proportioned to form a unified pass-through hatchway between the cab and cabin, whereby occupants can transit back and forth between the cab and cabin through the unified pass-through hatchway.

3. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, wherein: wherein the cabin further comprises a construction such that said expedition vehicle can be driven at speeds up to sixty miles per hour (~96) with the cabin in the expanded extreme.

4. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 2, wherein: the engine and riding gear package supports the cab and cabin independently of each other such that not only is the cabin disposed over a front set of tires and the cabin is disposed over a rear set of tires but also that the cab and cabin are allowed to sway or rock laterally on independent arcs from each other; and

further comprising seals in between the cab and cabin to seal the unified pass-through hatchway from weather.

5. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 4, wherein: the seals further comprise complimentary face seal provisions on the outsides of the cab's rear sidewall and cabin's front sidewall which form a sealing pressure just by compression therebetween, whereby said face seal provisions allow relative orbital motion relative each other while maintaining sealing pressure.

6. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, further comprising:

a powered vertical drive system for vertically cycling the open-topped lower-sidewall/floor portion and open-bottomed upper-sidewall/roof portion between expansion

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and contraction strokes thereby cycling the cabin between the expanded and collapsed extremes therefor; and
 controllers for the powered vertical drive system inside either the cab or cabin whereby users can cycle the cabin between the expanded and collapsed extremes from inside the vehicle and without having to exit the vehicle.

7. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 6, wherein: said powered vertical drive system comprises an electrically-controlled hydraulic system and said controllers comprise electronic controls.

8. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, wherein: said vertically telescopic, rectangular box structure comprises at least one or more rigid rectangular-hoop shaped, intermediate sidewall sections intermediate between the rectangular and open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion and the rectangular and open-bottomed upper-side-wall/roof portion.

9. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 6, wherein the cab has a rear sidewall formed with a hatchway; the cabin has a front sidewall formed with a mating hatchway sized and proportioned to form a unified pass-through hatchway between the cab and cabin, whereby occupants can transit back and forth between the cab and cabin through the unified pass-through hatchway.

10. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, wherein: the cab has a rear sidewall formed with a hatchway; the rectangular and open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion has a front sidewall formed with a mating hatchway sized and proportioned to form a unified pass-through hatchway between the cab and cabin, whereby occupants can transit back and forth between the cab and cabin through the unified pass-through hatchway; said front sidewall of said rectangular and open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion framing said mating hatchway in part by a cut-out therein for a lower portions of said mating hatchway and in other part by an inverted-U shaped framework for an upper remainder of said mating hatchway; the rectangular and open-bottomed upper-side-wall/roof portion of the cabin's vertically telescopic, rectangular box structure is formed with a cut-out in a front sidewall sized for closely fitting the inverted U-shaped framework of the front sidewall of said rectangular and open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion in the collapsed extreme, but creating an open headspace in the expanded extreme; further comprising a retractable closure for said open headspace in said front sidewall of said rectangular and open-bottomed upper-side-wall/roof portion of the cabin's vertically telescopic, rectangular box structure when in the expanded extreme.

11. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 10, wherein: said retractable enclosure is formed by a plural panel retractable enclosure design.

12. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, wherein: the cabin interior is provided with an interior partition provided with a door; and said door: is partitioned into upper and lower panels, the upper panel travels coplanar one side or the other during retraction and extension stroke co-planar relative the lower panel, and the two panels have separate hinge axes which are offset relative to each other.

13. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 12, wherein: said doors are curved, and

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the upper panel's outer edge at the outside of the curve travels horizontally away from the counterpart outer edge in the lower panel when the door is OPENED, and does the opposite when the door is CLOSED.

14. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 1, further comprising:

at least one bed platform suspended from the open-bottomed upper-side-wall/roof portion of the cabin, and when the cabin is in the expanded extreme, said at least one bed platform occupies an upper story of the living enclosure.

15. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 14, further comprising:

another bed platform mounted to the open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion of the cabin, and when the cabin is in the expanded extreme, said other bed occupies a lower story of the living enclosure; wherein the upper and lower stories of the living enclosure are traversed by a spiral staircase.

16. A motorized expedition vehicle comprising:

a truck cab,
 an engine and riding gear package, and
 a cabin comprising a living enclosure;
 wherein the cabin is expandible and collapsible between expanded and collapsed extremes, and has a vertically telescopic, rectangular box structure comprising at least: a rigid rectangular and open-topped lower-side-wall/floor portion, and a rigid rectangular and open-bottomed upper-side-wall/roof portion; and

wherein either the cab or the cabin have the greatest width for said expedition vehicle, and either the cab or the cabin have the greatest height for said expedition vehicle in the collapsed state, and said expedition vehicle has a length; such that the greatest height for said expedition vehicle in the collapsed state, the greatest width for said expedition vehicle and the length therefor too are all sized for the purpose of fitting said motorized expedition vehicle in a close-fitting fit in a standard international cargo-container and be shipped abroad while collapsed into the collapsed state, in order to efficiently occupy the space provided by such standard international cargo-container.

17. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 16, wherein: the cab has a rear sidewall formed with a hatchway;

the cabin has a front sidewall formed with a mating hatchway sized and proportioned to form a unified pass-through hatchway between the cab and cabin, whereby occupants can transit back and forth between the cab and cabin through the unified pass-through hatchway; and the cabin has a rear sidewall provided with a rear hatch whereby, if the vehicle has been parked inside a cargo container, such that none of the side doors can open, and the cabin is collapsed, any occupant therein is not trapped inside neither the cabin nor the cab, but can manage an exit from said vehicle out the rear hatch.

18. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 17, wherein: said cabin is furnished with furnishing that nevertheless leave a crawl-through passageway therethrough in the collapsed state such that the unified pass-through hatchway, the rear hatch and the crawl-through passageway allow a user to drive said expedition vehicle into and park inside a close-fitting cargo-container and then crawl out from the cab, or else crawl into the cab of said expedition vehicle when parked inside such a close-fitting cargo-container from the rear hatch.

19. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim 17, wherein:

said cabin comprises at least one panel partitioning the cabin into a living enclosure interior space and a rear utilities compartment, and

said rear hatch comprises at least one hatch between the living enclosure interior space and the rear utilities compartment, and at least another hatch between the rear utilities compartment and the outside of the cabin outside of the rear sidewall. 5

20. The motorized expedition vehicle of claim **16**, wherein: the cab seating provisions comprise bucket seats, and, said unified pass-through hatchway is disposed between said bucket seats. 10

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